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ABSTRACT

A discussion of diary studies, research on second language learning and teaching that uses student journals about the learning experience, defines the method, reviews a number of such studies, and examines the pros and cons of this approach. It is noted that diary studies are first-person case study research, a form of empirical (data-based) research enhanced by introspection and analysis. Introspection can be concurrent with the learning event, immediate retrospection, or delayed retrospection. Diary studies span this continuum. Problems associated with the method include: sampling limitations (small samples, biased subjects); data collection issues (those inherent in self-reporting, bias in retrospection, limitations of introspection, quality and breadth of entries, and commitment of the diarist); and data analysis concerns (limited generalizability of small quantities of information, inappropriateness of causal statements, and all problems typically associated with qualitative analysis). The method is seen to have advantages for: teachers, in re-examining the language learning process; learners, for whom diaries are a safety valve for frustration, promote awareness of learning processes and pitfalls, and are evidence of progress; and language learning research, by adding to the knowledge base and also revealing new issues and factors to be considered. Contains 105 references. (MSE)

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DIARY STUDIES OF CLASSROOM LANGUAGE LEARNING: THE DOUBTING GAME AND THE BELIEVING GAME

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Diary Studies of Classroom Language Learning: The Doubting Game and the Believing Game[1]

Kathleen M. Bailey

Introduction

Recently, after giving a talk about language classroom research at a university in Japan, I was asked during the question and answer period, "Why have you forsaken the diary studies?" I was somewhat taken aback by the underlying proposition in the question: Although I hadn't published anything on the diary studies for some time, I had no awareness of having "forsaken" them.

In contrast, I have recently been introduced at several conferences as being well known for my work on the diary studies. This too surprised me, but a colleague pointed out that the language learning diary studies were my "brainchild." My response was that the Schumanns had conceived of the genre, but they left it on my doorstep.

My intent in writing this paper is to clarify where I stand and what I believe about the language learning diary studies. In doing so, I hope to highlight issues of interest for second language acquisition researchers, for language teachers, and for language learners.

What is a diary study? According to Bailey and Ochsner,

> "A diary study in second language learning, acquisition, or teaching is an account of a second language experience as recorded in a first-person journal. The diarist may be a language teacher or a language learner -- but the central characteristic of the diary studies is that they are introspective: The diarist studies his own teaching or learning. Thus he can report on affective factors, language learning strategies, and his own perceptions -- facets of the language learning experience which are normally hidden or largely inaccessible to an external observer (1983:189)."

The diary studies are thus first-person case studies -- a research genre defined by the data collection procedures: A language learner keeps an intensive journal using

introspection and/or retrospection, as well as observation, typically over a period of time. The data analysis may be done by the diarist himself or by an independent researcher using the learner's diary (or some "public" version of that diary) as data.

As noted above, language diaries can be kept by teachers as well as learners. In this paper, however, I will not be concerned with teachers' diaries. For information on that topic the reader is referred to Bailey (1990), Enright (1981), or Nunan (1989:55-60). I will, however review the work of some teachers who kept journals of their experiences as language learners and who have commented specifically on how that experience related to their own teaching (e.g., see Danielson, 1981).

Neither will this paper address the use of dialogue journals as pedagogic tools. In dialogue journals, teachers respond to what students write in their diaries, as part of an on-going exchange. For further information on this procedure, see Kreeft-Peyton (1990), Kreeft-Peyton and Reed (1990), Popkin (1985), Spack and Sadow (1983), and Staton (1981).

Language Learning Diary Studies

When learners keep journals of language learning experiences in formal instructional settings, the resulting diary studies fit the tradition of language classroom research as described by Allwright (1983), Bailey (1985), Allwright and Bailey (1991), Brumfit and Mitchell (1990), Chaudron (1988), Gaies (1983), Long (1980, 1983), Mitchell (1985), and van Lier (1984, 1988, 1989). The diary studies are a form of empirical (data-based) research, enhanced by introspection, in the tradition of naturalistic inquiry (Guba, 1978; Lincoln and Guba, 1985)

Naturalistic inquiry is a broad rubric which can cover many different sorts of investigation. In classroom research these include ethnography, ethnomethodology, some discourse analyses and some case studies. In naturalistic inquiry, "first no manipulation on the part of the inquirer is implied, and, second, the inquirer imposes no a priori units on the outcome" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:8). In other words, (1) people are studied in naturally occurring settings, rather than in randomly sampled groups created artificially for the purposes of an experiment, and (2) the analytic categories typically emerge from examining the data. Allwright and Bailey (1991:40-45) have compared naturalistic inquiry and experimental research as follows: In the latter, researchers exercise a high degree of control over variables

and (in the true experimental designs) exert an intervention, while in the former, researchers choose not to control variables and try not to intervene. A similar contrast is drawn by van Lier (1988:56-60; 1989:33-35), who compares the naturalistic and experimental approaches to research on two intersecting continua: selectivity (from structured to unstructured) and intervention (from controlled to uncontrolled).

In a discussion of the methodological basis of introspective methods, Grotjahn (1987) locates introspective research among other forms of research by using categories from Patton (1980). In this framework, a research approach can be categorized according to:

(1) its design (non-experimental or "exploratory," pre-experimental, quasi-experimental, or true experimental);

(2) the type of data used (qualitative or quantitative);

(3) the sorts of analyses involved (interpretive or statistical).

The language learning diary studies can be classified as being in Grotjahn's (1987:59) "exploratory-interpretive" category, in that they typically utilize non-experimental designs, qualitative data, and interpretive analyses. A few that have utilized quantitative analyses are considered "exploratory-quantitative-statistical" in nature (e.g., Brown, 1983, 1985a; Matsumoto, 1989; Parkinson and Howell-Richardson, 1990). Others (e.g., Ellis, 1989a; Matsumoto, 1989; Schmidt and Frota, 1986) have involved combinations of data types and both qualitative and quantitative analyses.

I am using the term "diary study" in a way different from Hatch's use of the phrase in introducing the language acquisition case studies reprinted in Hatch, 1978. In those instances, researchers (often parents) kept daily observational logs of young learners' development. Although I will use the terms diary and journal interchangeably, here diary study will be restricted to the situation in which the learner himself keeps the intensive journal, thus permitting introspection and retrospection to inform the process of observational data recording.

It is important to note that a learner's diary alone doesn't constitute a diary study. The diary is typically only the data. In order to be considered a diary study, a paper must include an analysis. Rivers published her diary of a six-week trip in

Latin America, documenting her experiences "learning a sixth language" (Rivers, 1979, reprinted in 1983). Fields (1978) published a diary of her experiences in a Berlitz Spanish class and on a subsequent trip to Mexico. These papers include no explicit analysis of the data, so while the journal entries are interesting and certainly available to be analyzed, I do not consider these articles to be actual diary studies. Of course, in some instances the student may analyze the learning experiences within the journal itself. This is the nature of some of the diary entries made by Fields (1978).

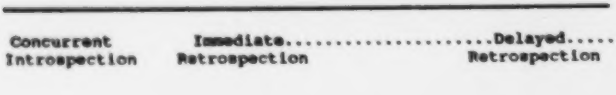
The diary data are a combination of learners' records of events and their interpretations of those events. The learners' introspection permits the reader to understand some aspects of language learning which are normally hidden from view. Introspective methods encompass "self-report, self-observation, and self-revealment" (Grotjahn, 1987:55). As Seliger has pointed out (1983:183), "introspections are conscious verbalizations of what we think we know."

A problematic methodological issue is timing. When does the verbalization take place relative to the event about which the learner is introspecting? The term introspective data is held by many researchers to refer only to data "gathered from subjects while they carry out a task" (Fry, 1988:159, underscoring added). In comparison, retrospective data are those "collected after the event" (ibid.). Of course, the difficulty here is that true introspection (such as the think-aloud protocols used by Abraham and Vann, 1987; Cavalcanti, 1982; Cohen, 1987; and others) can take place only so long as the event is occurring. Some diarists have reported making notes during a class or conversation -- e.g., Bailey (1980), and Henze in Rubin and Henze (1981) -- but there is concern that this procedure may detract from the language learning process. As Fry notes, "reporting on how one is doing a task while doing it is a double task" (ibid:160).

In contrast to true introspection concurrent with the task, the term retrospection involves a very broad data collection timespan, ranging from immediately after the event (following a language class, for example) to years later (as is the case in the language learning histories). Mann (1982:87) identifies three basic techniques for using verbal self-report as thinking aloud, introspection, and retrospection. Cohen and Hosenfeld (1981) distinguish among three similar categories of introspective data collection, each of which represents a band rather than a point: introspection (during the event), immediate retrospection (right after the event), and delayed retrospection (hours or more following the event). Thus the cover term

introspection entails all three zones: concurrent introspection, immediate retrospection and delayed retrospection, as depicted in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Introspection Immediacy Continuum



Data from this entire immediacy continuum have been utilized in the diary studies.

Given this general background on language learning diary studies, we can now turn to the purpose of this paper. It is my intent here first to review some of the language learning diary studies published to date, and then to examine the "pros and cons" of the diary studies by adopting first a critical attitude and then a more accepting stance.

The Doubting Game and the Believing Game

The title of this paper mentions "the doubting game and the believing game." These concepts were introduced by Elbow (1973), in the appendix to his book, Writing Without Teachers. Elbow's ideas originally referred to literary criticism but Elbow felt they could be applied equally well to "most procedures in the humanities and social sciences" (ibid:166). I find the doubting and believing game images useful in characterizing possible attitudes toward incoming information from research as well. A decade ago, Larsen-Freeman (1981) used these game metaphors in her comparison of four prominent theories of second language acquisition (SLA). With each theory she first adopted a critical stance, doubting and questioning the author's position (the doubting game). She then asked what insights she could gain about second language acquisition by adopting the author's position uncritically (the believing game).

The doubting game "seeks truth by indirection -- by seeking errors" (Elbow, 1973:148). This position underlies the logic of the null hypothesis in experimental research. (The formulaic language of the null hypothesis typically begins with the expression, "there will be no statistically significant difference between..." or "there will be no statistically significant correlation between...".) In this tradition, the researcher's job is to conduct an analysis which attempts to reject the null

hypothesis. The doubting game also emphasizes objectivity - the separation of self (the subject) from the object under investigation. It takes a critical, questioning stance toward evidence and conclusions drawn from the data.

In contrast, the believing game "emphasizes a model of knowing as an act of constructing, an act of investment, an act of involvement" (Elbow, 1973:173). It seeks truth by affirmation. In this sense, truth in the believing game is related to myth, metaphor, and allegory -- to convincing forms of story (Reason and Hawkins, 1988). In taking this attitude, the listener/reader accepts the experience of the person making the assertion. The believing game is "not an act of self-extrication but of self-insertion, self-involvement -- an act of projection" (Elbow, 1973:149). Playing the believing game involves inclusion of the subject as a legitimate focus of investigation. In fact, the believing game "is built on the idea that the self cannot be removed: Complete objectivity is impossible" (ibid.:172).

The objectivity/subjectivity continuum is crucial in interpreting the diary studies. In this approach to research, the subject becomes the object: We conduct (and read) diary studies to understand language learning as seen by the learners. We will return to this problem when we apply the metaphors of the doubting game and the believing game to the diary studies, after reviewing the findings of several such studies.

A Review of the Language Learning Diary Studies

This literature review will be limited to those language learning diaries which have been published. There are numerous unpublished manuscripts which employ the diary study method, but they are typically very long, unwieldy documents and their accessibility is limited. For these reasons, I will review only those diary studies that I have located which are in print and are therefore readily available to the academic reading public.[2]

The language learning diary studies can be divided into two groups: (1) those in which the diarist and the analyst are the same person, and (2) those in which the researcher analyzes journals kept by other language learners. Matsumoto (1987) has called these "introspective" and "non-introspective" diary studies, respectively. I am concerned that Matsumoto's labels may lead to some confusion, but she is careful to point out that in her usage, the terms introspective and non-introspective refer only to the data analysis, and not to the data collection phase of the research.

The terms direct analysis and indirect analysis have been suggested by van Lier (personal communication, 1991).

Diary Studies with Introspective (First-Person) Analyses

Pioneering work with the diary studies was published by Schumann and Schumann (1977), who kept intensive journals of their experiences in three language learning contexts: studying Farsi in Los Angeles, and in Iran, and studying Arabic in Tunisia. In this first analysis, the researcher/diarists identified six personal variables of importance in their language learning: the role of materials, rejection of the teaching method, and nesting patterns (F. Schumann); and a preference for eavesdropping vs. speaking, the desire to maintain a personal language learning agenda, and transition anxiety (J. Schumann).

What is noteworthy about this brief early report is the striking difference between two learners undergoing essentially the same language learning experiences. For example, F. Schumann found she could not begin to cope with the target language in a new environment (e.g., Tunisia and Iran) until her physical surroundings were ordered and comfortable (a phenomenon she referred to as her "nesting patterns"). In contrast, J. Schumann coped with his "transition anxiety" by plunging into the study of the target language immediately, regardless of his surroundings.

In 1980, F. Schumann published a further analysis of her original journal data. Additional themes which emerged as important in her language learning were (1) the role of the expatriate (English-speaking) community; (2) difficulties of a woman language learner in obtaining input, given social taboos against interaction; (3) the difficulties of obtaining input as a native speaker of English since most potential interlocutors wanted to speak English instead of the learner's target language; and (4) cooperation vs. competition in language learning. This last theme was later investigated in other learners' diaries by Bailey (1983; see below).

My first venture into the diary studies (Bailey, 1980) occurred when I was a student of J. Schumann. At that time I took a thirty-hour reading course in French as a foreign language to prepare for an examination. I also kept an intensive journal of this class, which could be characterized as a lower-intermediate French course. Factors that emerged as important in my language learning in that context were (1) the language learning environment (both physical and social), (2) my preference for

a democratic teaching style, and (3) the importance of success and positive feedback in the second language learning process.

As I reread that paper now, over a decade after writing it, I wish I had included more excerpts from the journal. What I find most compelling at this point is the account of a classroom crisis, taken directly from the diary, and the discussion of how the resolution of that crisis influenced the rest of the course. The argument (which occurred when the teacher returned a test that the students considered unfair) provides an example of what is known as a "natural experiment" in ethnography. As Hammersley and Atkinson explain, a natural experiment is an opportunity to explore "some unusual occurrence" (1983:31). These unusual but naturally occurring events

> "reveal what happens when the limiting factors that normally constrain a particular element of social life are breached. At such times social phenomena that are otherwise taken-for-granted become visibly problematic for the participants themselves, and thus for the observer" (ibid.:32).

The diary entry about the crisis (Bailey, 1980:60-61) documents the French students' verbal assertions that the test was unfair and too long; that tests are devastating to learners if the teacher's intent is to show them how little they know; that the teacher thought we weren't "very bright" and that the class was becoming "an armed camp." The natural experiment, in this case, allowed me to observe a group of very angry students -- hardly an event one could precipitate in an experimental treatment (provided that one was concerned about being an ethical researcher).

In 1980, Jones (another student of J. Schumann) reported on her experiences as an intermediate learner of Indonesian as a second language in an intensive program. Her diary study focuses on social and psychological factors which influenced her language learning. The positive experiences of interacting with her host family stand in stark contrast to the difficulties and frustrations she faced in the formal instructional program she attended. This brief report is based on the author's masters thesis (Jones, 1977), which provides more information about the language learning context than the paper does.

Danielson reports on her experiences as an older learner studying Italian as a foreign language. She enrolled in classes at two different levels. In the more

advanced class, Danielson was challenged and learned new material. In the lower level she gained confidence and practice opportunities. Danielson was a very experienced language teacher herself when she conducted this diary study. In the final paragraph (1981:16) she comments, "The observations I have included here are admittedly quite commonplace yet they all came as a revelation to me."

Another diary study is based on the experiences of a teacher-in-training (Henze), who enrolled in an Arabic class at the same time she was a graduate student investigating language learning strategies with her professor (Rubin). The resulting report (Rubin and Henze, 1981) benefits from two points of view in the analysis of the journal entries. In several other diary studies, language learners had recorded anything they considered interesting or important. Rubin and Henze modified this procedure and conducted what they called a "directed diary study": Henze's journal observations were directed specifically toward the role of inductive and deductive reasoning in her Arabic learning.[3]

Henze focussed her journal entries by using a list of six inductive and ten deductive reasoning strategies previously identified by Rubin (ibid.:17 and 18). She used the list "as a guide but the examples were only to be taken as suggestive of the kind of detail and strategies desired" (ibid.:19). The authors report that Henze found frequent use of the list distracting, but that keeping the basic strategies in mind "was very helpful in focussing her attention" (ibid.). Although she used the inductive reasoning strategies very little at the beginning of the Arabic course, after about two months, in response to different kinds of activities (e.g., dialogues) introduced by the teacher, more examples of inductive reasoning occurred.

Schmidt and Frota (1986) also conducted a diary study. The resulting article was written by a linguist-turned-language-learner and another linguist/analyst. This paper provides an excellent example of what the diary studies can offer. It documents Schmidt's learning of Portuguese for five months in Brazil. This was one of the first published diary studies to combine journal entries with other data sets. In addition to "R's" diary, the researchers tape-recorded and analyzed periodic target language conversations. Frota, a native speaker of Portuguese, conducted an error analysis of the conversational data.

The diary itself documents three stages in R's acquisition of Portuguese. During the first three weeks in Brazil he had no instruction in Portuguese. For the next five weeks he had both instruction and interaction in Portuguese, and for the last fourteen weeks he had interaction but no instruction. Schmidt provides

background information for interpreting his experiences in Brazil by giving the reader his language learning history.

This article may seem overlong to readers accustomed to the economic reporting of statistical publications in professional journals, but this length is a natural result of the diary study method. The paper is filled with rich examples from Schmidt's journal, written in the casual, self-as-audience style of the diary. The journal entries are complemented by transcribed conversations with Frota, and with numerical analyses of those data.

Another paper which may be classified with the language learning diary studies was written by Moore (1977). The author was a clinical psychologist and a native speaker of English, who took a post at a university in Denmark. This article discusses how Moore's proficiency in Danish influenced his professional life. The data he shares are from notes he made while attending a Danish class and after interactions with Danish colleagues: He does not specifically mention keeping a daily diary. Nevertheless, the article is informed by both introspection and retrospection, and gives the reader a sense of Moore's empathy as well as his psychology. He writes about how his experiences allowed him a better understanding of the problems faced by deaf people, aphasics, immigrants, and "especially perhaps the child in a class where the work is too difficult for him" (1977:107).

As mentioned earlier, Rivers (1979, reprinted in 1983) kept a diary of her experiences learning Spanish as a sixth language during a trip to South America. The article presents her daily diary, just as it was written, without any subsequent analysis. The entries consist of lists of the author's observations about her own strategies and hypotheses as she interacted with Spanish-speaking people. Some entries are extremely short. For example, one night Rivers wrote, "I felt I could understand the advertisements on the radio tonight" (1983:176). As a reader, I find the brevity of this entry frustrating, but parts of the journal have more depth.[4]

The second such journal (without an explicit analysis) was published by Fields in 1978 as a continued article in two issues of the Chronicle of Higher Education. The two-part story consists of Fields' diary entries as she took a Spanish course to prepare for an assignment as a newspaper reporter in Mexico, and of her trip to Mexico. While the paper lacks the detailed analysis to be properly called a diary study (as does Rivers, 1979, 1983), Fields' journal entries provide fascinating and

candid commentary about an adult learner's experiences in a formal instructional setting and then in the actual target culture.

In all of the papers discussed above, the analysis of the journal entries was done by the same person who kept the diary. The diary studies by Schmidt and Frota (1986) and Rubin and Henze (1981) each involved one learner who was also one of the analysts. The papers by Rivers (1979, 1983) and Fields (1978) both lack a formal analysis. In summary then, Table 1 lists those diary studies which have been reviewed thus far:

Table 1

Diary Studies by Learner/Diarist/Analysts

AUTHOR(S)/DATE(S)	LEARNER(S)	TARGET LANGUAGE(S)
F. Schumann & J. Schumann (1977)	2 experienced linguists/teachers	Farsi & Arabic
F. Schumann (1980)	1 experienced teacher/linguist	Farsi & Arabic
Bailey (1980)	1 experienced teacher/linguist	French
Jones (1980)	1 experienced teacher/linguist	Indonesian
Danielson (1981)	1 experienced teacher/linguist	Italian
Rubin and Henze (1981)	1 experienced teacher/linguist	Arabic
Schmidt & Frota (1986)	1 experienced teacher/linguist	Portuguese
Moore (1977)	1 psychologist	Danish
Rivers (1979, 1983)*	1 experienced teacher/linguist	Spanish
Fields (1978)*	1 reporter	Spanish

*(No explicit analysis was provided.)

Diary Studies with Non-introspective Analyses

The second macro-category of diary studies consists of those in which an external researcher analyzes the journals of other language learners. In this approach to research, which Matsumoto (1987) has called "non-introspective" diary studies, the learners' journal entries provide both the data and an "emic" (insider's)

view of language learning, while the researcher's use of SLA theory and previous research can provide an "etic" interpretation in the analysis. (For more information on the emic/etic contrast, see Watson-Gegeo, 1988:579-582, and van Lier, 1990:42-43.)

To my knowledge, the first published analysis of other learners' diaries was my work on competitiveness and anxiety in adult second language learners (Bailey, 1983). Curiously, this research started out to be an author-analyzed study on quite a different topic. I had originally planned to go back to my French class diary and document the learner's perspective on error treatment. When I analyzed the journal for references to this topic, there were very few. Although error treatment intrigued me as a researcher, it had apparently not been particularly important to me as a learner.

What I found instead were numerous comments about feeling competitive and anxious in the classroom. I was so uncomfortable with the results of this analysis that I felt compelled to look at the journals of other language learners, to see if anyone else had reported having these experiences. With their permission, I read the journals (or the public reports) written by ten other learners. The analysis led to a description of competitiveness and to two related suggestions: (1) language classroom anxiety (see Gardner, Smythe, Clement and Glicksman, 1976) "can be caused and/or aggravated by the learner's competitiveness when he sees himself as less proficient than the object of comparison" (Bailey, 1983:96), and (2) "as the learner becomes, or perceives himself as becoming, more competent (that is, better able to compete),[5] his anxiety will decrease" (ibid.). By trying to depict the relationship between competitiveness and anxiety which I found in the journals of these eleven learners, I came up with a visual model which I have since used with teachers and students, who are encouraged to trace their own "routes" through the flowchart.

Anxiety as a theme in the diary studies was also addressed by Parkinson and Howell-Richardson (1990), who used students' journals as the data base in a research project on learner variables. Their work involved two groups of English learners in Scotland: 23 students in a pilot study and 51 students in two other cohorts (29 students in Autumn, 1986, and 22 students in Spring, 1987). The authors also reported on work in progress involving the diaries of local Edinburgh people studying modern languages, including Spanish and French. The diaries of this latter group of learners were analyzed for comments on the use of the foreign language outside of class and for the learners' reported use of strategies.

The English learners' diaries were analyzed for (1) the reported use of English outside of class, (2) references to anxiety, and (3) informativity, which was a category related to specific information regarding the students' newly acquired knowledge. After quantifying the data, the researchers found a correlation between the learners' "rate of improvement and the amount of time which students spent outside class in social interaction with native speakers of English" (Parkinson and Howell-Richardson, 1990:135).

More interesting than their quantitative analyses, however, are the researchers' discussions of the data analysis procedures (ibid.:129-134) and their interpretive comments about the diary entries. For example, with regard to the variable of time spent on out-of-class activities in English, they write,

> "The figures recorded in the diaries are clearly subjective approximations of the actual length of time spent engaged in any one activity. A further variable to be taken into account is the value placed on various activities by the student himself. Clearly what a teacher or researcher may regard as 'linguistically relevant' is not always valued as such by the student diarist..." (ibid.:134).

I find the Parkinson and Howell-Richardson report tantalizingly brief and even sketchy in spots. However, the strengths of the paper include its use of quotes from the learners, the attempt to combine quantitative and qualitative analyses, and the use of data from multiple learners. The authors also conducted a pilot study to generate needed revisions in the research procedures. For more information about these projects, see Howell-Richardson and Parkinson (1988).[6]

The use of multiple learners' diaries was combined with data collection by a participant observer (both fieldnotes and tape recordings) in a doctoral dissertation by Brown (1983). The most accessible version of this study is found in her (1985a) paper on the input addressed to older and younger learners of Spanish as a foreign language. Her subjects were eighteen younger learners (ranging in age from 19 to 23, with a median age of 20.9) and eighteen older learners (between 55 and 75 years of age, with a median age of 63.6 years). Both groups included male and female students. All thirty-six learners were enrolled in an intensive Spanish program at the Mission Training Center at Brigham Young University, where they were in class six hours per day and had an additional two hours per day of homework. Brown's reason for studying these groups was that the older learners in the Mission

Training Center (MTC) had typically experienced more difficulty than the younger learners in trying to master Spanish.

The learners in Brown's study were given these instructions on keeping their diaries (1985a:283-284):

> "The journal has two purposes. The first is to help you with your language learning. As you write about what you think and feel as a language learner, you will understand yourself and your experience better.
>
> The second purpose is to increase the overall knowledge about language learning, so that learning can be increased. You will be asked to leave your language learning journal when you leave the MTC. However, your journal will not be read by teachers at the MTC. It will be read by researchers interested in language learning.
>
> Your identity and the identity of others you may write about will be unknown (unless you wish it otherwise) to anyone except the researchers.
>
> You will be given 15 minutes a day to write. Please write as if this were your personal journal about your language learning experience."

Brown analyzed the resulting diaries for "any reference to input desired, to amount of input given; to type, complexity or meaningfulness of input" (1985a:278). She found a different focus on the amount of input the learners were receiving: The younger learners wrote about input four times as often as the older learners, and this difference was statistically significant. (As far as I know, Brown was the first person to use inferential statistics in analyzing learners' diaries.) While there were only minimal quantitative differences in the learners' comments about the types of input they received, Brown notes a qualitative difference in the learners' diary entries: Over 28.2% of writing by the older learners dealt with desired changes in the input. In contrast, the younger learners' writing suggested changes only 2.7% of the time. The older learners' requests for instructional alteration may be indicative of their discomfort, but Brown does not speculate on this point.

The strengths of Brown's work are numerous. Hers is the first diary study to use comparison groups (in a criterion group design) and the combination of statistical and qualitative analyses of qualitative data. In addition, Brown's (1985b) use of both participant observation fieldnotes and learners' diaries permits

triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Fry, 1988; van Lier, 1988). The concept of triangulation has been borrowed from surveying, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:198) explain:

> "For someone who wanted to locate their position on a map, a single landmark can only provide the information that they are situated somewhere along a line in a particular direction from that landmark. With two landmarks, however, their exact position can be pinpointed by taking bearings on both landmarks; they are at the point where the two lines cross. In social research, if one relies on a single piece of data, there is a danger that undetected error in the data-production process may render the analysis incorrect: If, on the other hand, diverse kinds of data lead to the same conclusion, one can be a little more confident in that conclusion."

Brown (1985b) describes how she used learners' diaries and audio recordings of class sessions and her ethnographic fieldnotes to corroborate the inferences she drew.

In a brief section of a paper with a broader focus, Grandcolas and Soulé-Susbielles (1986) report on the use of diaries kept by French teachers-in-training who were studying language as part of their professional preparation. (This article does not mention the number of diarists involved.) The reported findings include (1) the importance of the teacher's personality and attitude; (2) the role played by the diarist's student peer group; and (3) the necessity of the personal commitment of the language learner. A fourth factor, which these authors call "shifted enunciation," refers to the fact that even when students interact with other students (e.g., when one student asks a question of his neighbor), the teacher is still the intended audience of the communication. Grandcolas and Soulé-Susbielles interpret this factor as underlining the importance of teacher-learner relationships, as opposed to learner-learner relationships. Unfortunately, in this publication the authors have space to provide only a brief report of the diary project. Interested readers are referred to Grandcolas (1986).

In 1989, Matsumoto reported on the language learning experience of a nineteen-year-old Japanese girl (called "M"), who attended an intensive English program in the U.S. for eight weeks in the summer. Matsumoto conducted a frequency count of factors mentioned in the thirty-six entries in M's diary, and reported the results as percentage data. This process identified nine learning activities, nine clusters of emotional factors, and sixteen "non-emotional factors"

which appeared in M's journal and are interpreted by Matsumoto as important to the language learning process. The journal entries, some of which are included in the article, were supplemented by questionnaire and interview data. Matsumoto also compared M's issues with those discussed in other diaries.

Ellis (1989a) also used learners' diaries along with other data sets in his analysis of classroom learning styles and their effect on second language acquisition. In what is probably the strongest data triangulation effort to date, Ellis utilized information from questionnaires, cognitive style testing, a language aptitude test, attendance and participation records, a word order acquisition score, speech rate and three proficiency tests, in addition to the journals of two adult learners, Simon and Monique, as they took a beginning German course at a college in London. The course was described as being "almost entirely form-focused" with instruction "fairly evenly divided between practise and consciousness-raising activities" (Ellis, 1989a:251). The goal of the course was "to develop a high level of linguistic accuracy in the use of L2 German" (ibid.:252). Regarding his procedures, Ellis wrote, "The learners kept journals of their reactions to the course, their teachers, their fellow students, and any other factors which they considered were having an effect on their language learning" (ibid:252-253)..

Ellis identified four key variables in the second language acquisition research literature on good language learners. In his review (see Ellis, 1990) the following factors were consistently related to effective language learning:

(1) a concern for language form;
(2) a concern for communication;
(3) an active task approach; and
(4) awareness of the learning process.

Ellis reports that Monique's and Simon's diaries provide "ample evidence" of the extent to which the two learners manifested these traits. Simon's diary documented all four, but Monique's revealed a lack of concern for communication in coping with the German course. Her extreme focus on form to the exclusion of an emphasis on communication is curious, since she was a native speaker of Creole but spoke both French and English fluently and accurately, and had lived in a multi-lingual society and used all three languages for communication (1989a:251). Ellis interprets this pattern as an adaptive response to the formal instructional context, and possibly a subordination of Monique's natural language learning patterns, as revealed in her history and other data sets. Ellis notes that "Monique's cognitive orientation was

almost entirely studial. Her journal shows that she is obsessively concerned with linguistic accuracy" (ibid.:254).

Judging from her performance on the formal outcome measures, Monique did relatively well in her coursework and met the accuracy goals of the German class. However, she performed poorly on an oral narrative task designed to assess fluency. On the accuracy measures, her scores are equal to or higher than Simon's. It is only through Monique's diary entries that we see how uncomfortable she was with the formal emphasis of the course. Ellis (1989a:257) reprints this and other direct quotes from Monique's diary:

> "I was quite frightened when asked questions again. I don't know why; the teacher does not frighten me, but my mind is blocked when I'm asked questions. I fear lest I give the wrong answer and will then discourage the teacher as well as be the laughing stock of the class maybe. Anyway, I felt really stupid and helpless in that class."

Ellis concludes that Monique probably would have benefited from a comprehension-based approach to learning German in the initial stages. He writes (ibid.:258-259),

> "Monique does not appear unduly disadvantaged, as she performs well in the grammar proficiency test -- i.e., she succeeds in developing the grammatical accuracy needed to succeed in the course. However, she pays a price. The course proves a painful experience and she is unable to perform effectively in a communicative task."

In spite of her discomfort, Monique attended 96% of the class sessions, compared to 86% for Simon, but Simon took more in-class practice opportunities than Monique. This brief but fascinating paper left me wondering how many low-level language courses are designed for students like Simon, but peopled with learners like Monique.'

These, then, are the published diary studies I have located in which the data were analyzed by researchers other than the diarists themselves. Table 2 lists these studies and summarizes information on the learners and the languages involved:

Table 2

Diary Studies in Which Researchers Analyzed Other Learners' Diary Texts

AUTHOR(S)/DATE(S)	LEARNER(S)	TARGET LANGUAGE(S)
Matsumoto (1989)	1 19-year-old Japanese learner	English
Bailey (1983)	11 learners, mostly teachers and linguists (though Fields' & Moore's reports were also used)	Several target languages
Parkinson & Howell-Richardson (1990); Howell-Richardson & Parkinson (1988)	51 foreign learners of English in Scotland; an unknown number of Scottish people learning foreign languages	English; French, Spanish and other unspecified target languages
Brown (1983), 1985a and 1985b)	36 older and younger learners	Spanish
Grandcolas and Soulé-Susbielles (1986)	Unknown number of teachers-in-training	French*
Ellis (1989a)	2 adult learners	German

*(I infer that French is the language under study, since the learners were French teachers-in-training.)

The Doubting Game

Given this review of the language learning diary studies, we can now return to the doubting game and question the value (indeed, the premises) of this approach to SLA research. The doubting game is based on skepticism: "Doubting an assertion is the best way to find an error in it" (Elbow, 1973:148). Playing the doubting game is not <u>just</u> criticizing, but it does involve taking a critical stance.

Although I do not wish to equate the doubting game and experimental science, it is especially easy to play the doubting game with regard to the diary studies if one has been trained in the experimental paradigm. From this perspective, concerns

about the diary studies can be divided into three main categories: (1) problems regarding the subjects, (2) problems in data collection, and (3) problems in data analysis.

Many of these issues are related to the concept of generalizability as a desired goal of experimental research. Generalizability (or external validity, as it is also called) is the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied beyond the context of the original investigation. In the experimental paradigm, hypotheses are tested on a sample of subjects, carefully selected to represent the broader population of interest. An inherent assumption in this form of research is that the findings of such studies can be generalized to that population.

Problems Regarding Subjects

The usual concerns regarding subjects in the diary studies hinge around the small number of learners involved. As with other case studies, there is often only one subject (see, e.g., Bailey, 1980; Danielson, 1981; Fields, 1978; Jones, 1980; Matsumoto, 1989; Moore, 1977; Rivers, 1979 and 1983; Rubin and Henze, 1981; Schumann, 1980). Obviously a learner can only introspect about his or her own learning processes (by definition), but it is also possible to compare the findings from different learners' diaries. Ellis (1989a) and Schumann and Schumann (1977) both reported on two learners, while Bailey (1983) reviewed eleven learners' journals (or the published reports based upon them). Journals from thirty-six learners of Spanish were studied by Brown (1983, 1985a, 1985b). The largest number of subjects reported to date was the cohort of 51 learners of English in the study by Parkinson and Howell-Richardson (1990). But even fifty-one is a very small number by experimental standards. The concern about large subject pools in experimental research is that (1) large samples are more representative of the population, and (2) most statistical procedures work more reliably with large numbers of subjects.

Another concern about several of the diary studies published thus far is the fact that many of the diarists were themselves linguists, experienced teachers, or language teachers-in-training. This is the case in all the published diary studies except for Brown (1983, 1985a, 1985b), Ellis (1989a), Fields (1978), Matsumoto (1989), Moore (1977), and Parkinson and Howell-Richardson (1990). As Parkinson and Howell-Richardson (1990:128) note, in these instances

> "the diarists are linguists...going 'back to school' after (and usually during) work as teachers/researchers/teacher educators, and their perceptions are inevitably affected by this: They sometimes find their theoretical sophistication surprisingly unhelpful, but it cannot fail to colour their report."

The concern is that these researchers/diarists may not be typical of other language learners -- either because they are potentially better language learners or because they may have more metacognitive or metalinguistic awareness. (According to Mann, 1982:89, metacognitive awareness means the subjects can "observe the contents of their minds and infer from this observation the processes in operation.") Teachers as language learners may also experience more ego-involvement in the language learning process than would other language learners. For these reasons, the concern is that what we learn about language teachers or linguists as language learners may not be generalizable to other students.

Problems in Data Collection

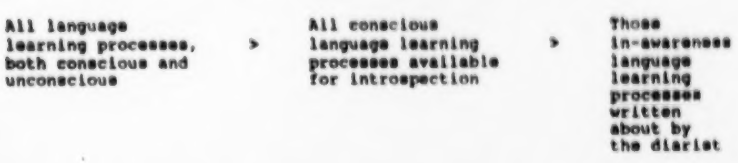
Another problem area for the diary studies involves the data collection process. By definition, the diary data are produced by the learner himself, recording, reacting to, and reflecting upon his experiences. Thus the diary studies are subject to all the difficulties associated with other forms of self-report (Oller and Perkins, 1978) and introspective and retrospective data collection (see Faerch and Kasper, 1987; Grotjahn, 1987; Seliger, 1983). The diaries involve subjective data, based entirely on the learners' perceptions of their experiences. They are by no means objective reports, and objectivity is one of the desired hallmarks of experimental research.

Furthermore, in cases where the journal entries are made after the event (immediate to delayed retrospection), there are serious concerns about how much time elapsed between the event and the recording (Seliger, 1983). As Fry points out (1988:160) "With retrospective data, all the problems of cognition in introspective data are magnified by the lapse of time between the event and the reporting of it."

Another serious concern about data derived through introspection is the question of what parts of our mental processing are actually open to examination. Seliger's (1983) methodological review examines, among other things, "psychoanalytic" studies utilizing "mentalistic data." He categorizes the diary studies and work involving think-aloud protocols within this type of research.

Seliger points out that data from the "psychoanalytic" studies can be evaluated in two ways: (1) in terms of what they tell us about the affective domain, and (2) "for what they can tell us about the processes of language learning itself" (ibid.:187). The problem with the latter, of course, is that we do not know how many or which of these language learning processes operate within learners' conscious awareness and are therefore available as objects of introspection. In the case of the diary studies, those language learning processes which learners actually choose to write about are potentially a smaller group than are all the conscious processes which learners might write about, and this subset of conscious processes is presumably smaller than the entire range of language learning processes, both conscious and unconscious, which influence second language acquisition. This relationship is depicted in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Subsets of Language Learning Processes


All language learning processes, both conscious and unconscious
All conscious language learning processes available for introspection
Those in-awareness language learning processes written about by the diarist

Even if we reject outright Seliger's (1983:187) claim that "obviously, it is at the unconscious level that language learning takes place," we must acknowledge that the diaries, as data collection devices, can only access some (as yet unspecified) subset of all language learning processes.

Likewise the quality of the journal entries varies from "thick description" (Geertz, 1973:6) to sketchy reports. If the diarist records only externally verifiable facts, we are left with a flat account, which could have been derived more reliably from transcribed tape recordings of the event. On the other hand, if the diarist records only reactions, without detailing the events leading to these reactions, the reader is left with assertions that lack credibility. Fry (1988:161) states that "consistency, in terms of time (i.e., that the data is recorded at a fixed time after the event, preferably as soon as possible) and in terms of depth (i.e., the level of detail

recorded) cannot be ensured." Seliger also notes that most language learners are not trained linguists and do not, therefore, have available the means for describing linguistic processes or for interpreting them reliably. And, if the diarist revises the journal for public consumption, as described in Bailey and Ochsner (1983), we have no way of knowing how much information has been deleted or changed.

Finally, as Fry points out, the diary-keeping process itself is extremely time-consuming "and initial enthusiasm may give way to fatigue" (1988:161). Rubin and Henze (1981:17) claim that "the amount of time spent keeping a diary can be reduced if students are directed to focus on specific aspects of cognitive learning." As a time-saving device, these authors suggest that learners make notes and mark them with an asterisk in their regular class notebooks (ibid.). Brown (1985b:132) claims that "both participant observation and diary studies require considerable time writing up the data and analyzing them, but participant observation takes more time in gathering the data." Nevertheless, as with any longitudinal case study, keeping a journal over a long period of time demands a commitment on the part of the diarist.

The issue of time, in turn, raises questions about the data collected in the non-introspective diary studies (i.e., those in which a researcher analyzes diary entries made by other language learners). What is the commitment, and what sort of quality can we expect from diarists who are required, in some sense, to keep intensive journals? Both Asher (1983) and Brown (1985b) discuss the difficulties of gathering data from learners, and the variable quality of data from different informants is a much-discussed problem in ethnography (see, e.g., Georges and Jones, 1980; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Johnson, 1975; and Malinowski, 1989).

Problems in Data Analysis

Problems in data analysis are related both to concerns about the subjects and about the sort of data generated by the diaries. Given the small number of subjects, and the fact that many have been potentially atypical second language learners, the generalizability of the findings of such studies is limited. Furthermore, with the lack of control over variables and the pre-experimental nature of the design, causal statements are not possible.

The data generated by the diarists are also subject to all the problems associated with other types of qualitative data analysis. These include issues of data reduction

(whether through summarizing, coding, developing typologies, etc.), the definition of categories, the open-ended nature of the data, reliability in coding and interpretation, etc. We must also be aware that the published diary studies are either extremely long (e.g., Schmidt and Frota, 1986, is ninety pages) or may involve abstractions and inferences with no supporting data (e.g., Schumann and Schumann, 1977). While quantitative data can be easily summarized, through the conventions of descriptive statistics, and presented in tabular form for economy of reporting, it is difficult to convey the compelling contents of learners' diaries without quoting excerpts from the journals themselves.

Part of the difficulty here is that second language acquisition research involving interpretive analyses of qualitative data lacks what Kaplan (1964:3-11) has called "reconstructed logic," instead, we have mainly "logic in use" (ibid.). In contrast, the familiar statistical operations associated with the experimental paradigm (i.e., the quantitative analysis of typically quantitative data) provide researchers working in that tradition with clear-cut procedures for making decisions about statistical significance. Experimental science and statistical procedures also involve a good deal of "logic in use," but this fact is often obscured by the clearly delineated "reconstructed logic" of the experimental paradigm.[8]

In analyzing the journal entries, the researcher (and subsequently the reader) must ask, "What constitutes a pattern? What makes an event 'salient' to the learner? How are key terms defined?" Such methodological issues have been widely discussed in qualitative approaches to data analysis in sociology (e.g., Brown, 1977; Johnson, 1975; Krippendorf, 1980; Morgan, 1983; Reason, 1988;), education (Marshall and Rossman, 1989), evaluation (Cook and Reichardt, 1979; Guba, 1978; Patton, 1980), and anthropology (e.g., Dobbert, 1982; Georges and Jones, 1980; Spradley, 1979, 1980). Likewise the life history approach (see Bertaux, 1981, and Watson, 1976) is widely used in social science research, as is the case study method (Yin, 1984). However, the interpretive procedures for analyzing qualitative data have not yet been well codified in the methodology literature on second language acquisition research, with the possible exception of discourse analysis. (An exception is van Lier, 1988, which deals with both coding and transcription.)

Furthermore, the diary studies have apparently not born fruit in terms of early claims about their potential usefulness as hypothesis-generating tools, although Fry considers the hypothesis-generating role to be the "most tenable of the claims" made about diary studies (1988:164). It is not clear whether this gap is a result of the diary studies themselves failing to suggest testable hypotheses, or simply the

result of experimental researchers choosing not to utilize the constructs or hypotheses suggested by such studies.

In short, from the point of view of experimental research, there are numerous problems associated with the diary studies, operating at all levels (of subjects, data collection, and data analysis). Most of these problems hinge around the notion of generalizability, the precept that the results of experiments or ex post facto studies on samples should be generalized to the wider population. The diary studies fall short of most of the requirements of external validity, and are therefore potentially uninteresting to researchers trained in the experimental paradigm.

The Believing Game

But achieving generalizability is neither the purpose nor the point of the diary studies. As van Lier points out (1988:2-3):

> "There has been almost unanimous pressure to choose topics for research that can be readily generalized to larger populations.... We are all agreed that greater understanding of language learners is also a legitimate activity."

The point of the diary studies is to understand language learning phenomena and related variables from the learner's point of view. If we set aside the notion that generalizability is the sole legitimate focus of SLA research, it then becomes very easy to play the believing game with regard to the diary studies.

Why should we play the believing game? Elbow, the author of the metaphor, claims that

> "By believing an assertion we can get farther and farther into it, see more and more things in terms of it or 'through' it, use it as a hypothesis to climb higher and higher to a point from which more can be seen and understood" (1973:163).

This is exactly what Larsen-Freeman did (in 1981), when she played the believing game with four different models of second language acquisition, trying to see what each one could reveal to her about the role of cognition in SLA, if she accepted the model's premises and arguments. We will play the believing game, with regard to

the language learning diary studies, in terms of what they have to offer teachers, learners, and second language researchers.

Benefits for Language Teachers

The experience of studying a language again, when one is already a language teacher, is always revealing. But the powerful and sometimes surprising insights one gains by struggling with a new linguistic system and all the emotional baggage that goes with it can best be captured and later reflected upon by keeping a diary. Rubin and Henze (1981) note that in pre-service training, the typical language requirement can be enhanced by having the teachers-in-training keep a journal of their experiences and analyze the trends. For instance, Danielson, an experienced teacher and teacher trainer, reports re-experiencing things which she knew but had lost touch with. I purposefully use this tactile expression to match the kinesthetic and visual images used in Danielson's entry:

> "Once again, I was actually experiencing and reflecting on many things which I intellectually understood but no longer felt or saw from a learner's point of view and many things which I had long ago tucked neatly away and forgotten" (1981:16; underscoring added).

Bailey (1983:76) discusses how the imagistic language of the diary entries can reveal the learner's attitude. Teachers reading learners' journals (and researchers who analyze such journals as data) should be aware of the metaphors students select to express themselves. (For a similar perspective in the teacher supervision literature, see Gebhard, 1984:509-512.)

Even without keeping journals as learners, teachers can benefit greatly from reading the available diary studies. The account of Simon and Monique's different reactions to their German program cannot help but remind us that our classes are full of dissimilar students, whose needs are only more or less met by our instructional decisions (Ellis, 1989a). Anyone working with older learners should read Brown's (1985a) and Danielson's (1981) reports. Teachers struggling with issues of testing and grading should read Bailey's (1980) account of students' reactions to an "unfair" test. And Schmidt's frustrations with his teacher denying the truth value of his utterances for the sake of the drill will sound uncomfortably familiar to instructors who have tried to balance the goals of the lesson with the learners' emerging personal agendas. These vignettes from the learners are

powerful and sometimes disquieting reminders of the students' central role in classroom second language learning, and of how seldom we as teachers really know their points of view.

Benefits for Language Learners

How can the diary studies benefit language learners, other than by making teachers more aware of and sensitive to the learners' perceptions, strategies, and feelings? It is my belief that it is useful both for learners to keep journals and to read diary studies by and about other language learners. First we will consider the benefits of keeping journals.

The frustrations of learning a second language are well documented in SLA research. Some authors feel that keeping a diary provides a safety valve. This is the cathartic function of diary studies: Learners may write out their frustrations instead of skipping or dropping class, or harboring grudges against the teacher or other learners (Bailey, 1983; Bailey and Ochsner, 1983:193).

Some learners have the perception that keeping a language learning diary can promote awareness of second language learning processes and pitfalls. The following comments were taken from learners' diaries cited in Grandcolas and Soulé-Susbielles (1986:301):

> "This observation work has made me aware of the part I was able to play in my learning of the language. It was possible for me to take part actively in this course, even with this traditional method, as I really wanted to learn something else differently. It seems to me that, if every learner was made aware of his/her learning, the development of the course would be changed."
>
> "Our part of learner/observer has made our utterances less spontaneous, more consciously organized for the checking of such or such a hypothesis.... We were much more sensitive to what was important and what was not.... Let us not go to a language lesson as passive consumers!"

These sentiments are echoed by Rubin and Henze, in their co-authored analysis of Henze's journal (1981:24):

> "There are definite benefits from making such observations. Henze (the learner) said that the research helped her to focus her learning, and that by the end of the course she had concretized some vague notions about her own learning by providing specific examples. After the study, Henze could more clearly see how she uses her knowledge of other foreign language structures in the comparison and modification of hypotheses in learning Arabic. In addition, the diary helped Henze to evaluate her own learning strategies enabling her in some cases to manipulate situations so that she received the most benefit."

In this case, the authors claim, both making the diary entries and later analyzing them were helpful to the teacher-turned-learner.

Brown also found that, in the diary entries, learners were able to recognize their own progress and suggest ways to improve the instructional program. She states that many learners "gave evidence in their journals of being aware of their progress. It may be that the awareness would have come without the journals, but writing it down made it very evident" (1985b:131).

As Fry has noted (1988:161), "the act of recording aspects of learning behaviour will raise consciousness of that behaviour and may change it." This is, of course, a restatement of Labov's (1972) classic "observer's paradox." But this fact, which is a potential drawback for researchers, can be a tremendous asset for language learners. Asher (1983) has documented ways that she used published diary studies in helping to make adolescent learners of French more aware of their own learning strategies. There are probably several ways that diaries could be used by creative teachers in learner training programs.

Benefits for Language Learning Research

As noted above, diary studies of language learners in formal instructional settings are part of the emerging tradition of language classroom research, as described by Allwright (1983), Allwright and Bailey (1991), Bailey (1985), Brumfit and Mitchell (1990), Chaudron (1988), Gaies (1983), Long (1980, 1983), Mitchell (1985), and van Lier (1984, 1988, 1989). With data generated by the learners themselves, the diary studies provide us with views from "inside the 'black box'," to use Long's (1980, 1983) metaphor for the unexplored processes of classroom language learning. Like other introspective methods, diary studies give us

information about the language learners and particularly about their perspectives on affective and instructional factors which influence second language learning.

The use of diaries as a source of data is a well established procedure in naturalistic inquiry (e.g., see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Malinowski, 1989; Plummer, 1983:17-21; and Yin, 1984). While the diary studies are not experimental, they are empirical, in the sense that they start with the collection of data -- data, in Bateson's (1972) sense as "records of events." The learners' journals, however, provide both records of events and, through introspection and retrospection, the learners' responses to those events. In an age when both pedagogy and curriculum development have recognized the learner's central role, it is appropriate that researchers should also bring the learner into the picture. In fact, Allwright and Bailey (1991) have suggested ways for classroom researchers to include learners collaboratively in the research process. The lingering question is, what do diary studies have to offer research?

I would argue that the diary studies are absolutely essential to advancing our understanding of classroom language learning. At the present time we are working with an unrefined tool to craft an only dimly understood representation of language learning. Properly done, the diary studies can provide us with important missing pieces in this incredibly complex mosaic -- pieces which may not be fully accessible by any other means.

Diary studies allow us to see factors identified by the learners which we, as researchers and teachers, may not consider to be variables worth studying. The lack of researcher control over variables, which is seen as a problem in experimental science, is viewed as a strength of the naturalistic inquiry tradition. Experimental research on classroom language learning has often been criticized for its laboratory-like cleanliness and disregard for context (e.g., van Lier, 1988). One strength of the diary studies to date is that they reflect the "real-world" conditions under which the data were collected: F. Schumann writes about the discomforts of her living quarters in Tunisia; Schmidt relates his extreme annoyance with the Brazilians who talk about him in Portuguese, not knowing that he understands; Jones expresses her humiliation in the Indonesian class, where the program director belittles her in front of the other students. These are all factors which are not controlled in experimental research -- nor are they usually even addressed. But for these learners, and presumably for many others, they were powerful negative experiences which were perceived as having an influence in the language learning process.

Another positive factor is that the primary data collection process, keeping a diary, is "low-tech," portable, and trainable. It can be used by any language learner with the will to introspect and retrospect, and the ability to keep writing. It does not require extensive preparation in test development, questionnaire design, or statistical procedures. Nor is it expensive in terms of equipment and materials.

This does not mean, however, that anyone can and should conduct diary studies. Rather, the basic prerequisites for data collection include at least a willingness to view oneself critically, and the ability to question one's motives and write comfortably and consistently, regularly and at great length, without premature editing. This is a very difficult task indeed. (See Yin, 1984:55-60, for a more detailed discussion of desired skills for case study researchers.)

Furthermore, the diaries can provide valuable sources of data triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Fry, 1988; van Lier, 1988) when used with other sources of data. This strength has been aptly demonstrated by Brown (1983, 1985a, 1985b), Ellis (1989a), Matsumoto (1989), and Schmidt and Frota (1986). Given what we are beginning to learn about individual differences in language learning (e.g., Ellis, 1989b) SLA research which fails to take personal variables into account must be interpreted very cautiously. Without the diaries written by Simon and Monique, Ellis (1989a) would have had an impressive battery of test results on the two learners, but no way of accessing their very different responses to their instructional program.

An appreciation for individual differences (which Schumann and Schumann, 1977, called "personal variables") leads directly to the importance of studying single learners in depth. The value of the detailed case as an exemplar has long been recognized in the life history approach (e.g., Bertaux, 1981; Watson, 1976) and in case study research (see Yin, 1984, for a thorough methodological discussion). The language learning case studies collected by Hatch (1978) yielded extremely important ideas in the early days of second language acquisition research.

It is certainly useful, in the search for generalizable findings, to obtain measures of central tendency and measures of dispersion of scores about the mean in a group of scores, but these data and the subsequent inferential statistics which are conducted with them do not supply all we need to know about language learning -- particularly in classrooms, where there is at least some obligation to help the learners get on with learning. If we had only means and standard deviations and tests of statistically significant differences, we could not tell how profoundly and

distressingly different Monique was from Simon (in Ellis, 1989a). Nor can we begin to understand the factors which drive people from the language classroom unless we listen to the learners: the drop-outs, the discouraged and the overwhelmed who often just disappear from experimental studies, or suffer through the course to the end without our discovering why they did poorly (or even well) on (some of) the dependent variables. Here again we find a parallel between the doubting game and experimental research: "The doubting game deals with classes of things...whereas the believing game deals with particular, unique things" (Elbow, 1973:165). SLA research, in its zeal to generalize, must not lose sight of the individual learner.

It has been argued by Fry (1988:163-164) that the diary studies "have revealed nothing that directly contributes to our understanding of SLA processes." Fry's review, however, does not include some of the more substantial diary studies (e.g., Bailey, 1983; Brown, 1983, 1985a, 1985b; Ellis, 1989a; and especially Schmidt and Frota, 1986) which are now available. (I think Fry's claims are essentially right for the two diary studies he does cite: Bailey, 1980, and Schumann and Schumann, 1977).

As we improve the diary study tool, the resulting SLA findings will also be more helpful. For instance, in Schmidt and Frota (1986), the combination of Schmidt's linguistic insights and Frota's native-speaker awareness leads to very convincing comments about second language acquisition. Even though Krashen (1983) introduced the "notice-the-gap" principle, it is now Schmidt and Frota's revision of that principle, supported by illustrations from "R's" journal, which is most often cited in the SLA literature. Likewise, Schmidt's experiences, as documented in his journal, shed new light on the autoinput hypothesis, which was suggested in an earlier form by Gregg (1984) and Sharwood-Smith (1981), as Schmidt and Frota point out. Such diary studies have the capacity to add depth, detail, and realism to existing hypotheses and theoretical constructs.

The diary studies are also ready sources of illustrations for researchers to use with non-researchers. As Peter Shaw has pointed out (personal communication, 1991), having clear prose examples of language learning as perceived by the learners themselves can be extremely useful for communicating with audiences who are not trained in the interpretation of statistical reporting. Such audiences include many teachers, most language learners, some funding agency representatives, parents, administrators and the media.

Finally, learners' journals and the resulting diary studies can offer researchers a wealth of new ideas and questions about second language learning. The following come immediately to mind:

(1) Following from Parkinson and Howell-Richardson's (1990) discussion of learners' perceptions of time spent on language learning, van Lier (personal communication) has suggested we consider the role of quality time (as opposed to quantity of time) as a variable in SLA.

(2) Given the cooperation/competition factor which has emerged in some diary studies (e.g., Schumann, 1980; Bailey, 1983), how can couples (Brown, 1985a; Schumann and Schumann, 1977) and teachers or groups of classroom learners manipulate this factor to enhance language learning?

(3) For learners in second language situations, what are the respective roles of in-class instruction and out-of-class interaction in promoting and/or inhibiting second language learning? (See Jones, 1977, and Schmidt and Frota, 1986.)

(4) What do learners gain in situations where the variable linguistic input available is sometimes more and sometimes less demanding and challenging? (See Danielson, 1981, and Schmidt and Frota, 1986.)

(5) How do the language learning experiences of non-linguists (e.g., Fields, 1978, and Moore, 1977) differ from those of linguists, if at all?

(6) What language classroom factors lead to debilitating anxiety (Bailey, 1983; Parkinson and Howell-Richardson, 1990) and how can such anxiety be managed?

(7) What differences emerge in the perceptions of learners in the same class, program, or situation (e.g., Monique and Simon in Ellis, 1989a; Schumann and Schumann, 1977)?

These questions (and many others) can be addressed by diary studies, provided they are done well.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Other sources of information may be useful to people interested in using this approach to research. These include the methodological papers which have been written about the diary studies. Both Matsumoto (1987) and Fry (1988) have published critical reviews of diary studies in the journal of the Japan Association of Language Teachers. Matsumoto's work is generally laudatory: She plays the believing game. Fry's work is more critical: He plays the doubting game through most of his article, but then comments on the usefulness of diary studies in action research (Kemmis and Henry, 1989; Kemmis and MacTaggart, 1982; Nunan, 1989, 1990). Brown (1985b) has compared the diary studies and participant observation as two approaches to language classroom research, and Howell-Richardson and Parkinson (1988) have discussed the "possibilities and pitfalls" of learner diaries. Bailey and Ochsner (1983) make a case for improving the quality of diary studies by (1) establishing believability, (2) identifying (and identifying with) the audience, (3) minimizing author distance, (4) providing information about the second language learning context, and (5) explaining in some detail how the diary data were collected and analyzed.

Other related papers are concerned not with diary studies per se but with a broader focus on introspective and retrospective data collection in general. These include Cohen and Hosenfeld's (1981) paper on uses of mentalistic data in SLA research, which is generally positive. The volume by Faerch and Kasper (1987) -- particularly the methodological paper by Grotjahn -- provides a valuable treatment of introspective methods. An important criticism of this type of work is by Seliger (1983), who argues that learners' "verbal reports can be taken as a starting point for research, not as an empirical conclusion" (1983:185). Chaudron's (1983) article on metalinguistic judgments is helpful, and Mann (1982) offers numerous useful suggestions for improving the quality of introspective data -- particularly the think-aloud form of verbal protocols. Working in a different tradition, Churchland (1990) discusses introspection and its connection to conscious knowledge.

Numerous references to classroom research have already been cited. As part of a broader research tradition, language learning diary studies are part of naturalistic inquiry (see Guba 1978; Lincoln and Guba, 1985), and are most closely related to ethnography. For articles on ethnography in language-related research, see Watson-Gegeo (1988) and van Lier (1990). Books on this topic include Cazden (1988), Saville-Troike (1982), and van Lier (1988). The collections edited by Green and Wallat (1981) and Trueba, Guthrie and Au (1981) are useful anthologies.

Information dealing specifically with quantitative and qualitative approaches to second language classroom research can be found in Chaudron (1986). In the broader arena of general educational research, Cook and Reichardt (1979) have edited a book on qualitative and quantitative research methods. Yin's (1984) book on case study research would be very useful to anyone considering doing a diary study.

For people wishing to read more about competing research paradigms, an excellent starting point is Ochsner's (1979) paper, which argues for a bilingual perspective in SLA research. He discusses the history of both the nomothetic (experimental) paradigm and the hermeneutic (interpretive) tradition, in which the diary studies may be categorized. Ochsner's work influenced both Long's (1980, 1983) ideas on approaches to language classroom research, and Schumann's (1983) discussion of art and science in SLA research. Smith and Heshusius (1986) outline the history of relations between positivistic (experimental) science and naturalistic inquiry, highlighting the major philosophical differences between the two approaches.

In this paper, I have tried to define the diary studies and to locate them within classroom research in the naturalistic inquiry tradition. Next I summarized the findings of the diary studies published to date. Then I tried to raise concerns by playing "the doubting game," and to raise interest by playing the "believing game." My intent was to play both games equally well, but I believe that it is of potentially more importance to play the doubting game from the perspective of one who accepts the genre (and can therefore bring an appropriately critical eye to bear upon its offerings to date) than to play just the believing game. As van Lier has pointed out (1989:42),

> "The blacksmith cannot criticize the carpenter for not heating the piece of wood over a fire. However, the carpenter must demonstrate a principled control over the materials used."

I hope that in this paper I have demonstrated that the diary studies are at least an emergent craft. We have not perfected the use of learners' diaries as tools. Indeed, only a few of the published diary studies (e.g., Schmidt and Frota, 1986) have been exemplary. Much more work needs to be done.

Endnotes

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2. I apologize if I have overlooked any published diary studies and would appreciate being informed of the citations.

3. Asher also conducted directed diary research when she supervised a group of eight adolescents receiving French instruction in the U.S. and then subsequently using their French in a homestay program in Switzerland. Asher gave her learners several different tasks to do, related to discovering their own learning patterns. These tasks included reading and analyzing diary entries from Bailey (1980) and Jones (1980). More information can be found in Asher's unpublished masters thesis (1983).

4. It would probably be worthwhile for someone considering doing a diary study to attempt an analysis of River's (1979, 1983) data, as a way of getting familiar with the process.

5. Although we do not often make the connection in present-day English, competent and compete originally derived from the same root words. (See the Oxford English Dictionary, 1971:718-719.)

6. I apologize to the authors for not having discussed Howell-Richardson and Parkinson (1988) in more depth. It was not available to me as I wrote this article.

7. Following Asher (1983), I believe learners' diaries can be useful tools in learner training programs. The study by Ellis (1989) is accessible and clear, and the contrast of the two learners' styles would provide useful discussion material for other second language learners to read.

8. It is not my intent here to criticize experimental science or to point out the numerous short-comings of working with quantitative data: When I wish to determine causality or correlations, I work with those research designs and the appropriate statistical tools.

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